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My Soul

A Poem in Six Cantos

By

Henry A. Van Dalsem

MY SOUL

A POEM IN SIX CANTOS

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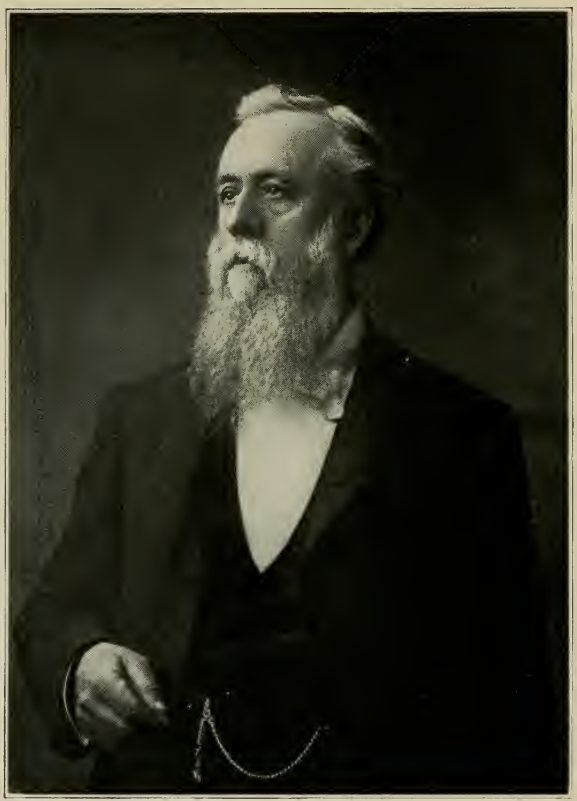
HENRY A. VAN DALSEM



HENRY AUGUSTUS VAN DALSEM

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Friede Van Dalsem, M. D.

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TO MY WIFE

FRIEDE VAN DALSEM, M. D.,

A comrade soul whose equal vision reads
Between the lines of intertangled creeds
The living truth that shining thro' them all
Forever with our native darkness pleads,

This book is dedicated.

PROLOGUE

Ever the full heart speaks, tho' none reply;
And smothered in the clamors thronging by,
Or lost amid the dreary silences
Of solitude, it seems to die.
Yet tho' the pealing tempest loudly roll,
And rushing, mighty winds the storm extol,
Who rules the diapason of the world
Will hear the still, small whisper of a soul.

CANTO I—WHO AM I?

I.

Stand forth my soul and tell me who thou art:
The sons of wisdom, walking far apart,
Each only proving all the rest untrue
Know not the spring whence all thy glories start.

II.

Dark they pass on, discerners of no sign
That writes those glories all and only mine,
And separates thee from the multitude
Of souls o'er whom unending mercies shine.

III.

Somewhat they know, perhaps, the Sage and Seer,
Whom other sages doubt and some revere;
To weigh the earth and measure sun and star
Or chain the elements they use—and fear;

IV.

But naught of thee so near and yet so far,
The deepest of all mysteries that are;
Linked in our least as in our greatest dreams
Yet evanescent as the falling star.

V.

And where in all of life is Nemesis
So stern, so cold as in her dark abyss
Is Ignorance, tho' deep the seeker delve
Who in a single measure stands remiss?

VI.

Who then may whisper me the countersign
That shall my entrance make within the line,
When to the vale of shadows I descend
Dreaming to rise again incarnadine?

VII.

Nay, who shall vouch if in that after sphere
My selfhood shall remain, or disappear
Merged in the oversoul from whence it came
As raindrops mingle in the rolling mere?

VIII.

Son of a thousand fathers, child of none,
Since from them all thy web of life was spun,
Thou shuttle in the loom of circumstance,
To whom belong the patterns thou hast run?

IX.

Art thou some ancient penitent, whose tears
Have won the pity that sustains and cheers,
While thou art wandering from star to star
The spirit pilgrim of a thousand years?

X.

Who wert thou then? Where broke thy waking gaze?
And art thou still the same for blame or praise?
Or, oft incarnate, are thy weary feet
Still mounting heavenward by hidden ways?

XI.

Art thou some messenger whose cryptic quest
To thee unknown, shall reach another's breast
And lead ye both to that eternal calm,
The blest Nirvana where the perfect rest?

XII.

Truth's angels may be only such as thou
Tho' far they pass and oft in sorrow bow;
Whose compensation shall be sure and sweet
Altho' they perish on Golgotha's brow.

XIII.

Art thou some stranded ghost of long ago,
Who watched the laggard ages wane and grow
Till kindly nature framed a vibrant form
Thro' which the anthems of thy hope may flow?

XIV.

What then? In ten times seven years the knell
Shall sound for my poor clay and break the spell
Of being both for me and thee, and who
Shall then assign the kernel to its shell?

XV.

Art thou some spirit cast from Paradise,
Some lesser Lucifer, whose proud device
New hammered in the clanging forge of time,
Itself shall be thy restoration's price?

XVI.

Loud let the anvils ring their pardon plea!
Till every exile shall at last be free;
Until the lost is sought and found, and love
Eternal calms life's tempest driven sea!

XVII.

For this, and this alone, oh! mystic soul,
My heart, might, mind and strength shalt thou control.
For this and this alone would I aspire
To know thee, whom to know were wisdom's goal.

XVIII.

If I am I, then who indeed am I?
And wherefore is there none to tell me why
Incessant life should toss me on its wave
From ages past to ages never nigh?

XIX.

If that which once has been must ever be
Who then may know the acorn in the tree?
And who, among the acorns never sown
Shall count the trees that never graced the lea?

XX.

Who knew himself a babe, or would surmise
He ever looked on life with infant eyes,
Did he not see a mirror of his past
In every child beneath the bending skies?

XXI.

If, summoned from some distant sphere,
A little while I am incarnate here,
Why am I not to others like me known,
And why to mine own self so far and sheer?

XXII.

By some ancestral legend named and known,
Leaders nor led have ever stood alone;
The sons of God, of Mary, or of man,
In borrowed titles still must win their own.

XXIII.

But who, familiar with his sires, may know
What of today and what of long ago
Is joined in that hereditary self
Which he received and may in turn bestow?

XXIV.

Dark falls the veil that hides the primal man
Whose far forgotten self no seer may scan;
But evermore amid life's later forms
That ancient birth exerts for weal or ban.

XXV.

Myself, of all the spirits I have known,
Can least define and comprehend my own;
Forever to myself a mystery,
Seeking for bread I can but gather stone.

CANTO II—WHAT AM I?

I.

Fain would I know before I shall depart
Not only Who, my soul, but What thou art;
Whose secret essence all my search evades
Altho' so plainly traced upon my chart.

II.

Who shall that strange relation read for me
Which holds between my flesh and blood and thee;
So close that none may tell if twain or one
We were and are and evermore shall be?

III.

Why should my wasting body shrink and pine
Because of some catastrophe of thine?
Or wisdom's ray in thy fair lamp be dimmed
Thro' some inane transgression wholly mine?

IV.

Why should thy night of sorrow or despair
Be chiseled in my face and bleach my hair?
Or my disease or pain or woe or wrath
Thy reason in insane delusion snare?

V.

Oh strange compound of weakness and of might!
Fearless, yet whom a pin may put to flight;
Grasping the world tho' all the world oppose,
Yet shrinking from thine own in self despite.

VI.

Distort this skull of mine but by a hair
And lo! thy gaze becomes a senseless stare;
Thy wondrous enginery all disarranged
Tho' every wheel and pinion still be there!

VII.

What art thou then to me, and to the world,
Oh spirit meteor thro' ether hurled?
So briefly bright, so sure and swiftly dark,
What art thou when thy gleaming wings are furled?

VIII.

The bursting stars that shatter thro' the sky
Are not more truly rent than thou and I;
Yet thro' that common ruin safely passed,
Shall they and we live on altho' we die.

IX.

There is no loss. Our present forms transmute
As from the withered blossom springs the fruit,
And in the cycle of unending change
Forever life to death stands attribute.

X.

So when fate's mighty alchemist shall steep
This mortal temple in eternal sleep,
Its elements from out a thousand tow'rs
May shine as shine the beacons of the deep.

XI.

If then thou art a spark of that great light
Which filters thro' the world's onrolling night,
Must thou be less my soul, or it be more
When jointly beaming from some other height?

XII.

If thy small candle from its bracket swings
To beckon Mercy's overshading wings,
Shall they not find thee when thy mortal craft
Its cargo to the great hereafter brings?

XIII.

Art thou God's image, as the fables tell,
Hurled from thy high estate when Adam fell,
To drag that holy likeness thro' the mire
And pitfalls that bestrew the road to Hell?

XIV.

But who is he whose divining rod
Thrusting thy mystery shall show us God?
Whom to define were only to deny
And leave the highway of our hope untrod.

XV.

Whose hope in sacerdotal legend lies
Shall he his halting brother's faith revise?
Or lift the pilot hand to point the way
Whose own advance is but a dim surmise?

XVI.

Nay, nay, my soul, howe'er thy whimsies wind
Thro' fables old and new ones just as blind,
Thou art no type of omnipresent form,
No pattern of creation's master mind.

XVII.

Nor yet art thou a blighted Eden bloom
Flung on the waters of forewritten doom,
To drift ashore as best perchance it may
Or perish in the seaward winding flume.

XVIII.

Jehovah's breath art thou? Lo! breathing things
Live but a little while.—Tomorrow brings
To thee from out the shadows of the past
No hint of yesterday's forgotten kings.

XIX.

Shall then the spirit of the beast abide
On earth and smother in the downward tide,
While thine, ascending on immortal wings,
Flies from the sphere in which it breathed and died?

XX.

Art thou God's thought? Perhaps, as is the leaf
Upon the bush His thought, whose life tho' brief,
Was moulded in another long ago
And follows still the fashion of its chief.

XXI.

Is all life one, and thou my soul, a form
By life attained in some unfinished norm
Which passing on shall know a fairer robe
Than this habiliment of calm and storm?

XXII.

Then art thou kindred to the smallest thing
That lives, tho' helpless and inert it cling
Cocooned like thee upon its lowly bough
A chrysalis of undeveloped wing.

XXIII.

Oh intimate unknown, thy horoscope
Forever flutters on the plumes of hope,
Only to vanish in the wonderland
Wherein my baffled fancies vainly grope.

XXIV.

So dim the light, so faint the gloom, it seems
The twilight of Olympus round thee streams;
Wherein to greet thy golden dawn I watch
And sleep—to wake as children wake from dreams.

XXV.

Yet shall the natal signal of the past
Still serve thee when the homing anchor's cast,
And wisdom's welcome spreads her loving arms
To clasp and lead thee to thy metaphrast.

CANTO III—WHENCE AM I?

I.

Oh mystic traveller to spheres unseen
By paths unknown, where shadows intervene,
Whence comest thou, and where began the quest
In destiny's wide field thy sheaves to glean?

II.

No new creation thou, by will Divine
Fused in the birth of this thy mortal shrine,
And handicapped or e'er thy race began
To struggle heavenward by paths malign.

III.

Did that great pow'r that reared the mountain spars
And spangled heaven with unnumbered stars
Evolve all races from a single type,
And with God's image give them Adam's scars?

IV.

Could wisdom infinite, whose word unrolled
A perfect universe in beauty scrolled,
With falt'ring functions form a faulty world
And choose a banished rebel for the mould?

V.

Did then thy substance in its fiery thrall
Slumber while earth was but a molten ball,
And with its kindred throng the cooling sod
When beck'ning nature breathed the Master's call?

VI.

There never was a lonely rose, the first
Of all his kind, in mateless beauty nurst
Till from his riven side a comrade bloom
In fairer form and sweeter glory burst.

VII.

No waking thing, or bird, or beast, or man,
This earthly life in solitude began;
And pairing with its complement became
The sole progenitor of all its clan.

VIII.

This segment of eternity called time,
Emerged full powered for its perfect prime;
Not void and formless, a deficient scheme,
But in the whole, as in each part, sublime.

IX.

And souls were there fraternal as the rest,
And thou wert there, oh tenant of my breast;
A seedling locked in evolution's mould
As in the rolling wave its latent crest.

X.

But whence the seed in that fair soil that lay
Until the lord of life passed by that way,
And sent it throbbing thro' its natal line
To beat within these veins of mine today?

XI.

Where was I when my spirit's wander-year
Commanded me awhile to journey here?
Somewhere, somehow, I must have been,
As otherwhere I must in time appear.

XII.

If Samuel at Endor answered Saul,
And Moses and Elias came at Jesus' call,
Where is the path between their life and ours,
And whither winds the intervening wall?

XIII.

Is there no fiery pillar in the night,
No moving shadow when the day grows bright,
No star of Bethlehem to stand and shine
Above the cradle of our sleeping light?

XIV.

Whence came the bloom that beautifies the rose,
The sweet aromas that in fruit and grain repose,
The violet's perfume, the linden's grace,
The vigor that the cooling spring bestows?

XV.

From whence the music thro' the air that rings
When nature strikes her harp of many strings?
Are these less wonderful than thou, my soul,
Or less remote among secluded things?

XVI.

From whence the fire that sleeping in the stone
Wakes to the steel and then is swiftly flown;
From whence the fairy phosphorescent glow
That gilds the seawave when the gale is blown?

XVII.

From whence the living current that allays
Our darkness with its incandescent rays,
Or thunders thro' the engine's mighty wheels
To greet the bustling world it serves and sways?

XVIII.

From whence the impulse of the ant and bee,
And whence the warbling wild bird's tuneful glee,
And whence the wonderful unshaken law
That binds with sand the all encroaching sea?

XIX.

Here let thy prideling waves of thought be stayed,
Thy plunging at the bounds of life abeyed;
Eye hath not seen, nor mortal ear hath heard
The things thy vaulting fancy would invade.

XX.

Canst thou by taking thought make white or black
A single hair, or by thy wit's attack
The spotted leopard's grayling glory change,
Or from today thy former journey track?

XXI.

An arrow thou, still passing thro' the air;
But where the bow that shot thee there
And what the message of thy pending flight,
No searching armor bearer may declare.

XXII.

Not thou, my soul, shalt mark whence thou hast flown,
Nor he, who stands behind the Ezel stone;
The archer's voice thy legend shall reveal
When far afield at last thou liest prone.

XXIII.

Be it enough that as in that far day
Twas love that sent the shafts upon their way,
So love divine from out the quiver drew
And launched thee, and His arrows never stray.

XXIV.

And whether high or low thy course be cast
Concerns thee not whose mission holds thee fast;
Alike the humble and the lofty serve,
Alike they share the quiver's rest at last.

CANTO IV—WHITHER GO I?

I.

If long before the Eden era's dawn
In vast antiquity thy lines were drawn,
Whose evolution still must bear thee on,
Where wilt thou dwell when all the world is gone?

II.

If breathing, man became a living soul
Who was not man before, how reads the scroll
When breathless he returns to earth again,
Yielding the part that made his being whole?

III.

Shall he, once free, his forward course arrest
And yet again his scattered dust invest;
So plundering the many forms of life
That may in his lost elements be dressed?

IV.

As well the autumn drifted woodland leaf
Resume its place upon the bough, the sheaf
Upon its native stubble stand again,
As man hereafter hold his earth born fief.

V.

Each particle of this our mortal frame,
Rent by disease or storm or wave or flame,
Its congeners shall join, and, as of old,
Obey the will of Him whom none may name.

VI.

The grim cessation of unfinished dreams,
Which we call death, whose sullen shadow streams
Thro' all we do and are, is, after all,
The fairest of our mortal era's themes.

VII.

The tardy evolution of the plan
Which of a molecule has fashioned man,
Must lead him farther up the hills of life
Than is the journey since his race began.

VIII.

Then, not to earth and earthly shadows wed,
To linger with the dying and the dead,
But onward, trained by all that thou hast seen,
To things unseen, unknown, shalt thou be led.

IX.

Thy sphere shall call thee as the sunrays call
The rose that clambers on the garden wall;
And in that new environment disclosed,
Full blooming life thy glory shall install.

X.

So, when thy mortal hours have passed away,
Unto the fathers shall thy journey lay,
Whose own ancestors of a thousand years
Outnumber all the souls on earth today.

XI.

As one who bears a lantern in the night
He can but walk within its fitful light,
That shining still a little way ahead
Moves as he moves and keeps the pathway bright.

XII.

So by the ray that thro' thy darkness tines,
Revealing step by step thy pilgrim lines,
Unfearing and unhindered shalt thou go
Nor falter at the world's forbidden shrines.

XIII.

The candle lit, consuming as it burns,
Sees not itself nor evermore returns;
So, blind to self, and dying while we live,
We journey to the rest our labor earns.

XIV.

Dying to live and living but to die,
Whose passing hours to higher beauty fly;
Till life at last shall triumph over death
And cast her garments of transition by.

XV.

The form once dead shall waken nevermore
To heed the whimsies of the soul it bore,
But lives again in memory alone
To image forth a spirit gone before.

XVI.

True to the past we know, but dare we say
Love's fondest recollection can portray
The soul, that launched upon its upward flight
Has left its outworn vesture by the way?

XVII.

The memory of yore, tho' sweet and blest,
Is not a picture of today, nor test
Of any morrow we shall ever know
Nor yet of one who is that morrow's guest.

XVIII.

Who seeks the mountain top must leave the vale:
But tho' life's highland hath a rugged trail,
To every briar clings its blooming rose,
And light against the darkness shall prevail.

XIX.

To him who in the love of truth reveres
The purpose of his life's achieving years,
How fair the view from Pisgah's lofty crest
When to his eyes at last the dawn appears!

XX.

Wouldst thou thy morrow scan, whose yesterday
With all its garniture of grave and gay
Already half forgot and fading still,
Is but a numbered milestone by the way?

XXI.

What knowest thou of those far former things
Whose fugitive uncertain whisperings
Thread with familiar hints thy passing hours
And yet elude thy thought's pursuing wings?

XXII.

Sufficient to the day the voice it bears,
The sorrow it endures, the joy it shares;
The fruitage of it all, to thee unknown,
Lies in the hand that smites thee while it spares.

XXIII.

In form alone but not in essence lost,
As is the filmy pattern of the frost
Upon the window pane, oh living soul,
Thou too shalt pass nor count thy glory's cost.

XXIV.

Then onward still thro' time's forewritten things
Buoyant upon thy hope's unbroken wings;
Pass to the grand eternal prototype
Which calls thee thro' incessant vanishings.

CANTO V—WHY?

I.

Why am I here? Yea, why do I exist?
A segregated cell from out the mist,
Whose fragile tenure of contingent life
Snaps like a reed in the wind atwist.

II.

Am I, because God is? Who not obeys
But is Himself the law that never stays;
Whose life conferring essence evermore
In countless forms the breathing world arrays.

III.

In ancient nature's springtime, long ago,
Behold the Sower hied him forth to sow;
And ne'er a seed from out his fingers fell
But somewhere, somehow, found a place to grow.

IV.

If all seeds bloomed then were this world of ours
Too small to harbor all its wealth of flow'rs;
But who shall tell us what those seeds become
Which oversown are lost in Flora's bow'rs.

V.

Life ceases not, diverted tho' it be:
The seed which in the earth becomes a tree
Dying unsown, imparts its vital self
However from its blighted hull set free.

VI.

The germ that blossoms on the pineclad hills
Is kin to those the feeding sparrow kills;
Nor knowest thou in all thy wisdom's pride
Which one of these the highest office fills.

VII.

Nor canst thou tell if life's aborted blooms
Lose all their beauty in these transient tombs;
Or if by nature's occult pow'r transformed
Each seed its interrupted grace resumes.

VIII.

And thou and I, my soul, are but the seed
Of some eternal purpose, which to heed,
A little while in this, our mortal bond,
We tarry till life's op'ning doors recede.

IX.

But wherefore walled in darkness and in doubt,
With mystery within us and without;
Prey of the rash and victims of the vile,
Whom liars may defame and villains flout?

X.

Why should the stress of poverty or wealth,
The sting of disappointment, and the stealth
Of sorrow dry the marrow in our bones,
And death sit regnant in the realm of health?

XI.

Why should our noblest anthems die unsung,
And ashes over all our joy be flung;
While masters in dishonor, shame and crime,
Mount to renown upon the hearts they've stung?

XII.

Since God is good, why should a fool or knave
Have pow'r to drive Messiah to his grave,
And crown with thorns and lacerate with spears
The noblest heart that Heaven ever gave?

XIII.

Are these the soil from which our being's best
Shall grow toward the fulness of the blest;
Like lilies climbing from their slimy bed
To bloom in beauty on the water's breast?

XIV.

The sweetest spirits earth has ever known
Have gone their way rejected and alone;
To whom, upon the shadow's other side,
Eternal Justice surely must atone.

XV.

"Is Life Worth Living?" Oh the narrow gage!
Is Death Worth Dying? asks the truer sage:
Since life is but a path, and death the bridge
That spans a chasm in the journey's wage.

XVI.

Beyond the chasm, when its riven shade
No longer on thy vision shall be laid,
Knowing as thou art known, thy high reward
For all that thou hast suffered shall be paid.

XVII.

What then? Shall thy reluctant will evade
The plan for thee by mighty nature made;
And shrinking from the searching of the light
Abort life's lilies ere the shadows fade?

XVIII.

Still as of old the tares of doubt are sown
By him, who, wandering from zone to zone,
Condemns the notions in another's creed
But teaches equal fables in his own.

XIX.

Nor yet by these alone: in childhood hours
Myself endured the question which devours;
What time I mingled with those somber saints
Who visit Eden but to mow the flow'rs.

XX.

The gloomy faces stung my youthful eyes
Of grouchy pietists austerely wise,
Who tried Eve's apples but to find them sour,
And scanned a laughing child with cold surprise.

XXI.

I see them still, whose puckered features ran
In furrows of despair no smile could span;
Whose goodness made them sad, their love to God
So great it left no room for love to man.

XXII.

What then? Did God waste time? Was He unwise
To build the world those holy prudes despise,
Who by their measure of unfitness here
Fitness assume for mansions in the skies?

XXIII.

Who vised the message of his loving hand
When Jesus stooped and wrote upon the sand?
And wherefore did he write no more, whose words,
Could we but read them, must the world command?

XXIV.

To him the golden heart whate'er its creed,
That wakes and answers to the call of need,
Must turn anew and deeper glory breathe
In every line by his dear love decreed.

XXV.

Wide o'er the world the sower's hand hath swung,
And souls of every faith and clime and tongue
In loving service to the cause of man
The harvests of immortal truth have sung.

XXVI

Herein then let thy thronging questions rest:
Thou art Love's child; Thy brother's helpful guest;
In hope despatched; Where those who need thee are;
Because in love to man alone shalt thou be blest.

XXVII.

Beyond this to thyself unknown, dear heart,
The wisdom of the world may naught impart;
Hereafter thou shalt know, when life reveals
The wondrous scheme in which awhile thou art.

CANTO VI—THE SOUL'S RESPONSE.

I.

Musing, I slept, and in my dream beheld
A lordly man of reverential eld,
In whose clear shining eyes I seemed to see
The peace that cometh after storms are quelled.

II.

Now wherefore art thou exercised to know
Thyself, he said, and whither wilt thou go
To clear the problem which no man has solved
Nor angel ever told for weal or woe?

III.

Since thought began, the world's philosophers
Have chased the phantom that thy being stirs;
Mystic and hermit, sage and devotee,
Have lived and toiled and died its worshipers.

IV.

For such as thou what vagrant orators
Have traversed wisdom's widely sundered shores,
And braved the wrath of nature and of man
To lead thee thro' the everlasting doors.

V.

And what reward had they, whose lifelong loss
Should prove thy gain? Lo! cherishing its dross
The rabid world impales its saintly ones,
And hangs its saviors on Golgotha's cross.

VI.

Oh shallow world, who shall thy passion rule?
That shuns Bethesda's angel haunted pool
And scorns the loving heart, to march beneath
The gaudy pennon of some blatant fool!

VII.

Far in the vistas of forgotten years
Behold the sandal shod, rope girdled seers,
Whose gold and ermine clad successors pose
The haughtiest among earth's kingly peers.

VIII.

Undaunted devotees of holy thought,
To set the world aright they toiled and wrought;
And struggling thro' a thousand errors found
Some part, at least, of that for which they sought.

IX.

But they are gone, whose torches lit the gloom
Where now cathedral towers proudly loom,
And clanging bells remind us it is time
Parading piety should don its plume.

X.

Oh! desert born and bred, whose shaggy brows
Were bent upon their ever present vows;
How grand the legacy of truth they left
Whose living beauty still our faith endows.

XI.

Yet who to these the loving tribute brings
That from the fountain of remembrance springs?
The heroes of a hundred centuries
Sleep in the silence of forgotten things.

XII.

No voices crying in the wilderness
Arouse the world today, to dispossess
The little foxes gnawing at her vines
Spoiling the grapes she vainly hopes to press.

XIII.

No more the sage with loving eloquence
Wakes from its sleep the doltish throng and dense,
And from the mountain top and blue sea's edge
Proclaims the meed of virtue's recompense.

XIV.

Nay, barely rang that gentle voice no more
When wrangling shepherds led their flocks to war;
Who by excesses vile and deeds of shame
Defamed the holy banners which they bore.

XV.

For man, who fights for love or hate or pride,
Heedless by whom his valor is defied,
Puts forth the maddest battle of them all
In deadly warfare for a creed denied.

XVI.

"Defenders of the faith" how vainly styled
Were they whose action all their creed reviled;
Whose gift of God, imposed with fire and sword,
By blood alone revealed Him reconciled!

XVII.

But what wilt thou, dear heart, when to this day
In army jargon, fond believers pray
"The God of battles" that He "march before"
Leading His "Christian soldiers" to "the fray"?

XVIII.

Whose church is "militant"; whose truth "a sword"
Whose "warfare" is the service of the Lord?
And all for one who as the Prince of Peace
And Counsellor the saints have long adored!

XIX.

What then, oh valiant man, doth God prefine
To lean upon that stalwart arm of thine?
Oh feeble God, whose own creations wield
The pow'r defendant lest His rule decline!

XX.

Let be! In nature and in nature's God
No contradiction dwells: the truth sure shod
Halts not nor limps upon the highway stones,
Nor they who follow on where truth has trod.

XXI.

No smug faced pedant dapper and inane,
Who thinks man ever turns to God in vain,
Has trailed the infinite, all patient love
That woos the wanderers without the fane.

XXII.

The blatant shouter of Gehenna's scheme
Himself afloat on Mercy's boundless stream,
Shall learn that whoso cometh unto God
Moves in a realm where pardon reigns supreme.

XXIII.

To our rebellion left until we tire
And light the penitential altar fire,
We prodigals are never turned away
When heavenward at last our souls aspire.

XXIV.

No flaming swords to guard that Paradise
Where Satan freely entered to entice,
Were ever stationed by divine command
To banish Adam to his own device.

XXV.

Nor Sodom's and Gomorrah's falling fire,
Nor Noah's mighty flood were done in ire;
For God is not a mad iconoclast,
Nor retribution His preferred desire.

XXVI.

Alone to stun the wonder seeking host
Some dreary dreamer framed an angry ghost;
Paving with pain the path of holiness
Whereby to save a few and damn the most.

XXVII.

For Faith must live tho' all believers die
Or spoiled and wounded on the roadway sigh;
The while their priests and Levites passing by
Make Heaven's livery of love a lie.

XXVIII.

The charmed recorders of immortal thought
Whose scattered scrolls by avid sages sought,
Succeeding ages grouped and called "The Word"
How wrote they of the faith that comes to nought?

XXIX.

The pearls of truth they found on wisdom's shore
And deftly mounted in didactic lore
Still shine, altho' the tarnished workmanship
That bore them shares their sacred light no more.

XXX.

When kicking thro' the dust of nobler men
The raging zealot storms beyond his ken,
False banners float and superstitions reign
And every Daniel finds his lion's den.

XXXI.

For faith is not when faith becomes a boast,
But dying yields its violated ghost
And shudders from the desecrated shrine
Where wrath is guest and pride the flattered host.

XXXII.

Behold oh heart for holy truth asearch
The ancient tales with all their stain and smirch,
That teach a heretic best pleases God
When well and truly murdered by the church.

XXXIII.

Behold the waverings of shaken trust
Which falters in the breath of every gust;
Whose banners proudly borne but yesterday
The morrow sees down trodden in the dust.

XXXIV.

When Moses tarries on the mountain's crown
The altars of the Lord are broken down,
And dancing to her calves of molten gold
Fanatic Israel attains the fool's renown.

XXXV.

Like sheep men go astray—one leader gone
They choose the willing next, whose fancies spawn
Upon the fruitful shoals of ignorance
And rush in wild vagaries madly on.

XXXVI.

Be thou thyself, for so the edicts run
Which made thee so unlike that other one;
Wherefore must each in his own sphere abide
Until his life's appointed task is done.

XXXVII.

But be not proud nor lofty manners wear
Because of some distinction thou dost bear;
For wealth and pow'r and fame and high degree
Fade like a snowflake melting in the air.

XXXVIII.

Sons of the great, full oft unlike their sires,
Seem but the ashes of exhausted fires;
While destiny's bold children, lowly born,
Climb to the heights a gazing world admires.

XXXIX.

And he who seems a variant may be
Some recrudescent of the ancient tree,
Which long in mediocre seasons lost
Yields to the world once more its natal fee.

XL.

Then humbly, thou, as one who more reveres
His brother than himself—in whom inheres
A love of truth that overshineth all,
Live to the full thy life's permitted years.

XLI.

Be thou no manager of other lives
Who cannot steer his own, the while he thrives
Upon the fleshpots of a penal creed,
Tho' weaker than the honest fool he drives.

XLII.

Be thou no trumpeter the world may woo,
A mere ecclesiastic cockatoo
Whose brazen halo of a self made god
Laughs at the lowly mien thy master knew.

XLIII.

Be thou no dull expounder of a text
By whom the moaning heart is sorely vext;
Whose platitudes disintegrate in air,
Mist in this world and vapor in the next.

XLIV.

Nor bow thee down submissive to the spell
Of idol worshipers, of ban and bell,
Whose captive reason walks in clanking chains
And in a dungeon seeks Immanuel.

XLV.

But lift thyself in spirit lovliness
Till weary hearts shall greet thee but to bless;
Till fainting souls, reviving and renewed,
Shall touch thee with a grateful prayer's caress.

XLVI.

Let those who suffer know thee for a friend
Whose loving toil no sacrifice may fend;
Whose faith is warm tho' all the world be cold,
Whose shield is broad when sorrow's darts descend.

XLVII.

Where walk the lonely and the anguishing;
Where broken hearts to broken idols cling;
Where smitten hope her withered laurel mourns;
Do thou the chalices of comfort bring.

XLVIII.

Strong in the trustful faith which sees no doom
From which the buds of promise may not bloom;
That looks on death and sees the life beyond,
Be thou a star of hope in every gloom.

XLIX.

So shall thy lines be written not in vain;
So shall thy feet the holy highlands gain;
From whose broad breast, along the shining way
Thy future journey shall be clear and plain.

L.

So mote it be, oh heart of many fates;
Till, glancing backward from the op'ning gates,
It shall be shown thee how, beside its graves,
A restless age the new Mesiah waits.

EPILOGUE

Still shall the thirsty drink from truth's pure tide;
To whom each offered cup, tho' sanctified,
Too much its taste imparts and spoils the draft
In formless freedom to the free supplied.
Nor shall the wise men judge him and condemn
Who finds another path to Bethlehem;
To his own master shall he stand or fall,
And share the riches of His grace with them.

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